

SENATE BILL REPORT

SB 5775

As Reported by Senate Committee On:
Health & Long-Term Care, February 23, 2009

Title: An act relating to the eligibility of foreign medical school graduates for licensing as physician assistants.

Brief Description: Concerning the eligibility of foreign medical school graduates for licensing as physician assistants.

Sponsors: Senator Keiser.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Health & Long-Term Care: 2/16/09, 2/23/09 [DPS].

SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

Majority Report: That Substitute Senate Bill No. 5775 be substituted therefor, and the substitute bill do pass.

Signed by Senators Keiser, Chair; Franklin, Vice Chair; Pflug, Ranking Minority Member; Becker, Fairley, Marr, Murray and Parlette.

Staff: Edith Rice (786-7444)

Background: Current law prohibits foreign medical school graduates from being eligible for licensing as physician assistants after July 1, 1989. Prior to this date, a physician's assistant was defined as "a person who is enrolled in or has completed a board approved training program designed to prepare persons to practice medicine to a limited extent, or a person who is a university medical graduate of a foreign medical school or college."

In order to be eligible to become a licensed physician assistant under current law, an individual must obtain a physician assistant degree from a program accredited by one of the following: the Accreditation Review Committee on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA), the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs (CAAHEP), or the Committee on Allied Health Education and Accreditation (CAHEA); and must successfully complete the national examination given by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA).

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

The Medical Quality Assurance Commission is responsible for the regulations governing physician assistants. Physician assistants practice under the supervision of a licensed physician.

Summary of Bill (Recommended Substitute): Graduates of foreign medical schools must comply with state law in order to be licensed as a physician assistant.

EFFECT OF CHANGES MADE BY HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE COMMITTEE (Recommended Substitute): It is clarified that graduates of foreign medical schools must comply with the same physician assistant licensing requirements as other applicants.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Committee/Commission/Task Force Created: No.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

Staff Summary of Public Testimony on Original Bill: PRO: To prohibit foreign-educated physicians from some kind of medical practice seems extreme. There are examples of other medical personnel who are not able to practice in their profession. We have such a shortage of medical personnel.

CON: Originally foreign graduates of medical schools were allowed to practice here as physician assistants. PAs became a catchall category. PAs are trained to work under a physician's supervision. Not all foreign graduates have been able to make that adjustment. There is the issue of cultural competence and having the same knowledge base. There are PAs who are graduates of foreign medical schools who are able to practice quite successfully. There should be some requirement that they get credentialed.

Persons Testifying: PRO: Senator Keiser, prime sponsor.

CON: Ruth Ballag, Medex NW PA Program, University of Washington (UW); Wen Shaw, Suzan Dula, PAs; Bill Crowell, PA-C; Carl Nelson, Washington State Medical Association; Ellen Harder, Maryellen Jansen, Medical Quality Assurance Committee; Gabriele Oguiza, Swedish Medical Center; Lyle Larson, PA, UW Cardiology.